

## Book Review

### **Martindale, The Extra Pharmacopoeia. Twenty-ninth Edition**

Edited by James E. F. Reynolds

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xxx + 1896 pages

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The twenty-ninth edition of Martindale was published in accord with the continuing tradition of aiming to provide unbiased concise reports on the actions and uses of most of the world's drugs and medicines to aid the practicing pharmacist and physician. At first sight, the twenty-ninth edition seems very similar to the twenty-eighth edition which I reviewed some seven years ago. It is more-or-less the same size, and the basic format is unchanged. However, the content reflects the phenomenal changes in drug therapy that took place during the decade just ended. Many of these changes are listed in the preface to the twenty-ninth edition. For example, we have witnessed a therapeutic revolution, in that products of genetic engineering techniques have become a major force in patient care. Also ACE inhibitors have become established as a major force in the treatment of hypertension; new approaches to the treatment of peptic ulcer have been especially interesting; new anti-infective agents have appeared; there has been a reduction in the indiscriminate use of anxiolytic drugs. The period between the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth edition has been one of great progress, and Martindale has been brought up-to-date to reflect that progress.

Martindale is based on published information. It is not a book of standards. It is international, not parochial, in its coverage. It

is, of course, arranged in sections. Part one is the monograph section organized in 72 chapters with therapeutic uses being the basis for chapter delineation. Part two is an alphabetical listing of supplementary drugs whose status is new or under investigation, obsolescent but still interesting, or just plain difficult to classify. Part three lists some 670 proprietary medicines that are advertised to the public in Great Britain and are usually supplied on demand. Other sections of Martindale list abbreviations, abbreviated names for various ions and chemical groups, notes on weights and measures, dissociation constants, the relation between body surface area, height and weight, atomic weights of the elements, directory of manufacturers, and, inevitably, a substantial index section.

As is the case for any person involved in dissemination of drug information, I am a frequent and regular user of Martindale, both for the purpose of answering questions put to me, and as a starting point for research. By far the commonest question is: 'What is \_\_\_\_?' The usual answer is: 'Let us look in Martindale, and if it is not there, our search is going to be long and difficult.' As the years have gone by, I have noticed some subtle changes. Succeeding editions of Martindale stay current, which is right and proper, but with the escalation of the volume of important available information, the problem of deciding what to throw out appears to be increasing. The result seems to be omission of interesting information edition by edition. I am finding that older information can remain important and that, probably contrary to common opinion, older editions of Martindale need to be retained, but used carefully. Thus the new edition will take its place with pride among its predecessors in my library.

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